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JELLY PELLEY

Should these pre-saucer era aliens be rescued from the pit of forgetfulness?

Martin S. Kottmeyer

I SHOULD have known better. Donna Kossy, in her book *Strange Creations*, described this wild old work called *Star Guests* (Fellowship Press, 1950) and I just had to get it. The material derives from automatic writing done in the late 1920s, but has commentary that post-dates the dawn of the nuclear era. The book has not a single word about flying saucers or UFOs. As Pelley's Invisible Intellects can cross intergalactic distances in a 'twinkling,' there is evidently no use for them.

The book is part of one of those interminable channelling projects one sees from time to time in the spiritualism tradition. Pelley mentions three or four times in this book that the Soulcraft project in total runs over a million words in length. Though naive readers may be impressed the first time they see this, the problem is that Pelley also has to plead "don't be exercised" by the repetition he has been getting complaints about. Yeah, it's one of those kind of writing projects.

There is embedded in the project the well-intentioned idea to make religious thought more palatable to modern sensibilities. Pelley had imbibed some of the terrifying wonders of modern astronomy and could no longer stomach fundamentalist Christianity. He also realises there are other religions on the planet with different concepts like reincarnation that we should not really just ignore. So he waves down some Muses variously termed Ancient Ruling Spirit, Great Author, Great Avatar, Great Master, Great Soul, Master Teacher, Master Brain, Over-Spirit, Super-Angels, Super Ministers, and Universal Spirit to give us New Sermons on the Mount and Lessons of Eternity. Like many channels, Pelley's muse is a King James wannabe and is in love with "ye" and "thee" and "verily" and "whither" and "woe unto" and "servants" and "sheep".

We end up with what science fiction editors once unfondly termed another Shaggy God story. Long before Erich von Daniken got onto best-seller lists, beginning SF writers filled slush piles with rewrites of Bible stories gimmicked up with modern science. Pelley realises that the universe is old. Souls from Sirius migrated to Earth millions of years ago. They came here to don bodies of matter and learn lessons that would aid them in their graduation to Higher Levels of Attainment. Something went horribly wrong after the celestial form fused with the beast form. All sorts of biological anomalies and hybrid monsters were created in the ensuing madness. The Great Abominatory Period or Sodom Age ended with a Purification - a Great Flood caused by a passing sun melting one of the polar ice caps killed some races. Also, fire was used to eliminate certain individual forms. An angel-ape hybrid was saved and gendered to breed true without further mixing across species. No more sphinxes and bird-headed Egyptians!

That part of the book is admittedly clever, but it takes only a chapter or so to tell it. The rest is rather less interesting. We hear from the Man of Galilee at one point, but when you pluck

away the flowery language he comes across as an annoying lout. He brags he can destroy the world if he wants to, but there are some world wars coming up that he wants to watch, so he'll be a nice guy and let us learn a few more lessons before he takes those of us he doesn't consider beasts to a better planet. Commenting on this 1929 Master Communication in 1950, Pelley remembers the Man spoke of world wars in the plural and so was expecting World War III. The Man also said "a Great Miracle soon cometh". 'Soon' is always a bit tricky, but I'm for saying we are well past the expiration date here and Pelley's Intellects are looking more Invisible than intended.

For Discarnate Intelligences hyped as Great This and Master That, their writings are soft and ethically unchallenging. We are exhorted to Love, Relax, and Be Patient which are well-enough virtues in some contexts, but are hardly the stuff that inspires one to do great works. They also seem strangely insecure. Witness, for example, this gem: "The enemy whispereth that ye are hoaxed. In your heart of heart ye know that ye be not hoaxed, else are ye turned aside from Me to commit abominations of conscience and mission. Take no thought to these whisperings." And pay no attention to the man behind the curtain, eh, Mister Wizard? He entreats doubters to know these revelations are "godlike and God-given," but what modern isn't thinking "delusions of grandeur" confronted with lines like that?

People educated in critical ways and able to stay awake through the numbing verbiage will periodically find contentious absurdities. At one point my eye awoke on a line claiming "Love and Harmony are the only creative forces." But natural history and biography often teaches that creativity feeds off destruction. Some of the wonders of the animal kingdom are shaped by arms races between predator and prey. In human history, we often see technological advance is pushed along by war and fear. Books generally form out of a spectrum of passions that may often include envy, mischief, and aggression. I particularly recalled a recent biography of Arthur Koestler who was one of the great writers of the twentieth century. He was a man of violent passions and it would be hard to deny they were an important ingredient in his creativity.

Admittedly that is perhaps a minor flaw, so let's address a matter Pelley seemed to consider paramount given the bold fonts he uses. Pelley asks the Great Teacher for the greatest message he wants to convey to the human race. He gets back this; "THE FACT that every life, no matter how humble, no matter how tragic, no matter how broken or thwarted, has a meaning and an Inner Glory and is precious in My sight!" A pretty thought for a few seconds perhaps, but then you recall the fate that awaits those people he calls enemies and beasts, the people who shun Him: "These go their way to the Pit of Forgetfulness, I tell you, to dwell throughout the Everlasting Nameless. Be advised, the world hath need of all, beloved, but the last." Silliness, of course. Torquemada, Osama, and terrorist believers are precious in his sight while the neighbourly village atheist can go to hell.

Ultimately this Scripture falls into contradictions of sensibilities. How can one really be modern clinging too closely to ancient attitudes like this and failed beliefs like the perennially rescheduled Second Coming? It is viscous goo, a little sweet and slick. Style - but no substance.

Kossy believes some of Pelley's stuff found its way into later alien channels like those of George Hunt Williamson. That may be so, but it is hard to decide. Clearly they share some of the same Shaggy God ambitions of rewriting the Gospels for the modern age, but that ambition was and is pretty widespread. Occult literature is a vast river of ink. In some ways it is too poorly mapped out to be sure Pelley is the source as against some other deservedly forgotten channelers. There are doubtless crosscurrents among the various channels.

If, as claimed, this really is the Divine Wisdom of another world order that hails from planets in other world systems in 'decimal Space,' well, Too Bad.

LITERARY CRITICISM

Reviews by Martin S. Kottmeyer

Athena Andreadis. *To Seek Out New Life: The Biology of Star Trek*, Crown, 1998



This is a totally curmudgeonly dissection of Star Trek from the perspective of someone very savvy in the fields of biology, linguistics, and anthropology. Transporters? Bah! Universal translators? Yeah, right! Human-alien hybrids? Get real! Changelings, holodecks, telepaths, pure energy beings? Git-outta'ere! Okay, she knows it's just a TV show and you have to keep things interesting, but even so, it's always good to know why these things are impossible. Andreadis struts her stuff cutting down the premises of most of the gimmicks of the Trek universe that a scientist of her training is entitled to kill. And it's a joy to watch. There is a rich tradition of nit picking in trek-dom and she is setting herself as a grand master. Violation of the Prime Directive is a particularly popular debating point and her discussion of the ethical inconsistencies it leads to both in the series and as a practical philosophical edict has to be the

best I have ever seen. Her discussions of Klingon society, Vulcan psychology, and Trill symbiosis are pretty keenly thought out as well. I totally recommend it and even ufologists can learn a thing or two from it. Like, human-alien hybrids? Get real!

John Horgan. *The Undiscovered Mind: How the Human Brain Defies Replication, Medication, and Explanation*, Free Press, 1999.

This is a lack of progress report on efforts to understand how the brain works. Much as we like to believe that computers are getting better at doing the things that the brain does, we appear to be a good way from building one that mimics common sense in a useful way. Efforts to modify the brain with drugs remain strangely ambiguous despite all the hype we hear about Prozac. Placebos - read Hope - are still one of the most powerful methods of helping people. Talking cures are similarly mired in doubts. We have little proof that any of the hundreds of therapies are better than any of the others and some evidence suggests that faith healing is better than anything supposedly rooted in scientific insights. People with no training in any psychological doctrines do as well at helping people as those who have years of experience. Efforts to explain human behaviour by genes have been bogged down by many phoney claims. Only certain clearly defined disorders where the brain breaks down at the neurological level like Huntington's disease have an undeniable genetic basis. Twin studies have problems that don't often find their way into popular articles on the subject. While Horgan is not in doubt that evolution contributed to the creation of our complex brains, a variety of claims in the emerging domain of evolutionary psychology are not much better than works of fiction. Between the ground of neurons and the airy realm of the everyday functioning of thought is a structure that is still little described by any existing theory. Not a book for the easily depressed.

Pascal Boyer. *Religion Explained: The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Thought*, Basic Books, 2001.

Now here is a tough one. The title states the ambition clearly enough. Boyer wants to give us an evolutionary explanation of religion. His framework is built from blocks of anthropological study and the presently fashionable vogue of cognitive psychology. The latter sees the brain as having evolved specialised modules for the processing of information and tasks. These modules came into being during the last few million years to implement survival strategies against the harsh life of Africa. Religion is of course a by-product of the functioning of these modules, not an adaptive strategy to deal with real spirits and gods who care about our individual behaviour.

Boyer patiently and carefully walks us through anthropological definitions and the findings of cognitive research and there is nothing overtly weird, but this is such unfamiliar territory it evidently is hard for the average reader to assess it. The analogy is probably unfair, but it is a bit like an average person walking through a discussion of the proof for Fermat's Last theorem. Everything seems in order in the bits we understand, but you pretty much have to defer to mathematicians when they say it is a compelling proof. Boyer recognizes there is frustration to the approach being offered because it is ultimately a complex matter involving several cognitive processes. It lacks simplicity and intuitive clarity.

There are some aspects of Boyer's thesis that I suspect sooner or later could be transplanted into a post-Hendry critique of IFO cognitive processing. There may also be material here that would describe the nature of techno-spirituality in cults like Unarius. The frustration that adheres to such an endeavour is that it will likely be unsatisfactory for similar reasons. It might be formally right, but few will recognise it without a background in cognitive psychology.

"Bringing UFOs Down to Earth" *The New Explorers*, A & E Home Video, 1998

There aren't very many UFO videos that advance the sceptical viewpoint. Most either are blatant advocacy or give a pretence of objectivity by giving sceptics a half-minute or so to counterbalance 45 minutes of mystification. This one is a rare effort to get into the debunkers' mindset. It isn't terribly sophisticated and to my eye comes across as a short course on "Flying Saucers 101", but, I suppose, one has to start somewhere. Phil Klass and James McGaha, one of the lesser known figures in the CSICOP orbit, are the people most prominently featured in this effort. Both are in fairly good form here and come off better than we see in standard sound-bite UFO journalism.

The prime pro-UFO spokesman is Jaime Maussan of Mexican ufology who has been hawking videos of UFOs and suggesting that The Landing will "very soon" take place in Mexico. The most delightful aspect of the show is the investigation of a UFO that has been seen regularly after midnight from a certain place in the Brazilian rain forest. No prizes for guessing what this might be, but along the way they show this village is so remote it has no power lines. Not much chance these people have been exposed to UFO mythology, right? Well, no. They pull the sheet off a battery-operated TV and then show clips of local Brazilian news programmes showing UFO symbols settling into places that have recently had sightings. Locals refer to these shows having UFO stories they saw on TV.

The programme seems a bit contrived and I doubt it will inspire anybody to rush into a career of debunking - not that there is such a thing - given the unexciting nature of this story. If you find a copy of this on sale, you might want to look at it, but I wouldn't spend full price on it.

"UFO Cults" *The Unexplained* A & E Home Video

Basically we get in this video a journalistic account of Heaven's Gate from its beginnings when Marshall Applewhite teamed up with Bonnie Nettles for their 1973 Road Trip, through Bonnie's death by brain cancer, to the mass suicide. Terrie Nettles describes how she and her mother wanted UFOs to pick them up. We get appearances by Hayden Hewes and Brad Steiger and David Taylor who did earlier writings on the group. The issue of the castrations gets discussed. We also learn of their various End-Time concerns. Even before Hale Bopp, they had been looking at the red sunsets caused by wildfires as a Sign. We learn at one point that the group had been improving financially near the end, taking in an estimated \$400,000/year.

In partial balance, we get an account of the Unarius group, who are predicting a different sort of transformation. They expect 33 spaceships to land in 2001. One will be in the Bermuda Triangle and the other 32 will arrive at the Ham, California Landing Site that the group has constructed. They expect 1000 thousand teachers per ship will emerge and share their science and solutions to our environmental and other problems. They are already partly in doubt of the prophecy and have already registered a loophole that if they don't land it will be because we are just not ready and too disorganised. One would think that such things would ensure their landing. If we were organised, why would we need their teachers? It is noted that Unarius is in part Eastern philosophy and part of the longing for utopia. A Christian looks at this religion and remarks there is a sucker born every minute.

A third religious viewpoint fills in the final few minutes as the beliefs of a Rev. Milton Nothdurft concerning Biblical UFOs and the Star of Bethlehem are mentioned along with his concerns about a shift of planets and a new way of life on Earth caused by free energy. We are also in summary told that cults are experiencing oneness with the universe.

"Struck by Lightning", *The Unexplained* A & E Home Video

People who are struck by lightning curiously often have a short period of mystical bliss according to this documentary. However, they also suffer disabling neurological disorders which oddly are hard to document by medical testing. Pondering this, I added one more doubt to my concerns over Persinger's idea that tectonic lights generate mystical states in UFO experiencers. If relevant, why aren't these UFO experiencers suffering a gamut of neurological horrors like those seen here. Heaven's Gate may have been deadly, but others like Unarius are basically harmless and we don't have to fear that suicidal religions are common. The tone is generally neutral and never strident or ridiculing on the part of the narrator. There is no effort to offer a sceptical commentary and we seem to be presented with an unstated effort at being understanding and tolerant of these divergent faiths. It seems fairer than it needed to be and was an honest effort at being informative with a good amount of detail-work in the Heaven's Gate chronicle. Not a great documentary, but good enough.

EDITORIAL

About 12 years ago Dennis Stillings wrote, "The ETH is extremely difficult to falsify, making it a fertile breeding ground for every sort of fantasy." He concluded, "In summary, I have to agree with those European ufologists who consider American ufology to be a frightful mess." ("The American Way": A Cock-and-Bullard Story, *Magonia*, No. 35, January 1990)

Since then there has been little change in American ufology. The psychosocial hypothesis is rejected out of hand. Sensible explanations for "classic" cases are brushed aside, with remarks about "armchair ufologists", "skeptibunkers" and "pelicanists". Witnesses are assessed not on their reliability, but on whether or not they say what the believers want to hear.

Instead of maturing over the years American ufology has remained in a state of thumb-sucking infantilism.



**Editor and STILL Supreme Commander
of *Saucer Smear*, Jim Moseley, pictured
at the 2002 Fortean Times UnConvention.**

LETTER



I am just writing you because I read your article/website about the classical migraine and the UFO correlation. It is definitely very interesting. I found your website because I was searching for an answer to my dad's zigzag auras. I was shocked to find out that it sounds as though he has been experiencing the classical migraine (aura without migraine). Anyway, as I read on about these people, who not only experienced the same auras as my dad, they have also had an encounter with a UFO. This is very interesting because my dad will never forget the cold winter morning of 1965 in Oshawa, Ontario, Canada. At around 4:00am my dad stepped outside on his way to work. As my dad was stepping into his truck, something caught his eye. He looked up and saw this beautiful circular object with circular coloured rings hovering just below cloud level. He gazed at the beautiful object for two to three minutes before it

quickly disappeared leaving a light vapour behind. At the age of twenty he obviously could not believe his eyes. Soon after this incident he became weak and dizzy. He had these frequent dizzy spells for about two years after the incident. Two or three years later, he started seeing these zigzags usually in his right eye. They would start small then gradually get bigger. He had many tests done such as MRIs and CAT scans but nothing was found. His doctor told him that he was a borderline epileptic and that he would not be able to drive again. My dad did not believe the doctor that he was an epileptic and began to take his problem into his own hands. He stopped having anything that contained caffeine and noticed that he got the zigzags much less. Fifteen years later he figured that the caffeine may not be the answer to his problem and started having caffeine again and started getting the zigzags more often. He is now happy to know that he is most likely experiencing a classical migraine after reading your article and Oliver Sacks's book. There should definitely be more studies done on the correlation of the migraine aura and UFO encounters.
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